



# **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ACTIVITY**

**THIS ACTIVITY WAS DESIGN BY  
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**

## WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK?

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

"There is nothing so American as our national parks. The scenery and wildlife are native. The fundamental idea behind the parks is native. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us. The parks stand as the outward symbol of this great human principle."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

### SUMMARY OF KEY EVENTS

1791	Federal government acquires 17 public reservations for the nation's capital.
1832	Congress sets aside area around Hot Springs, AR; designated for public use as a park in 1880.
1864	Congress designates land grant of Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove to California; designated as a state park in 1890, a national park in 1906.
1872	Yellowstone National Park established.
1906	Antiquities Act passed giving U.S. Presidents the authority to designate national monuments.
1916	National Park Service established.

### SYNOPSIS

Students work in small groups to explore specific national parks. Together, they learn about the mission of the National Park Service and discover how each individual park fits into the larger system.

### SKILLS

Brainstorming, cooperating, reading photographs, using maps, oral communication

### MATERIALS

Provided in the kit:

National Park Photo Cards

Provided by the teacher:

- copies of National Park Explorer Notes from this guide
- newsprint or flip chart
- markers to use with the newsprint and the map
- map of the United States of America

### OBJECTIVES

At the end of the activity, the students will be able to:

1. Explain the mission of the National Park
2. Name at least two national parks and describe the resources that they protect
3. Compare at least two different types of national parks

The words 'national park' have special meaning to most people, conjuring up images of Old Faithful, Yosemite Falls, and the Grand Canyon. Historically the first parklands trace their origins to the 17 public reservations that the federal government acquired in 1791 for the nation's capital. They included the National Mall, the White House grounds, and other units in the District of Columbia. In 1832 Congress set aside an area around the Hot Springs of Arkansas. This reservation was designated for public use as a park in 1880.

The earliest action by Congress to create a large natural park took the form of a land grant of Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove to the state of California in 1864. In 1890 California established these areas as a park. They were returned to the federal government in 1906 to become Yosemite National Park.

Yellowstone National Park, established in 1872, was the first federally managed national park. It was the first unqualified embodiment of the national park idea-the world's premier example of large-scale natural preservation for all the people. Since then the idea has been adopted around the world. After Yellowstone's establishment, the national park idea was attacked by special interests, stoutly defended by friends in Congress, and successively refined and confirmed. Fourteen more national parks were established in the West between 1872 and 1916, most of them closely following the Yellowstone prototype.

While the early national parks were being established, a separate movement got underway to protect the magnificent cliff dwellings, pueblo ruins, and early missions discovered by cowboys, army officers, ethnologists, and other explorers on the vast public lands of the Southwest. They were especially threatened by plunder and destruction at the hands of artifact hunters and vandals. The effort to secure protective legislation began among historically minded scientists and civic leaders in Boston and spread to similar circles in Washington, New York, Denver, Santa Fe, and other places during the 1880s and 1890s. With important help from Rep. John F Lacey and Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge, an Antiquities Act was passed in 1906 to help protect such areas and structures.

The act authorized the President "to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest' situated on lands owned or controlled by the US. government to be national monuments. It also prohibited excavation or appropriation of antiquities on federal lands without a permit.

The first national monument, proclaimed by President Theodore Roosevelt some three months after he signed the Antiquities Act, was Devils Tower. It was established to protect a prominent Wyoming landmark, an 867-foot massive stone shaft visible for a great distance and a guidepost over the centuries for Indians, explorers, and settlers. Today there are more than 70 national monuments in the National Park System.

A new era for national parks and monuments opened on August 25, 1916, 44 years after the establishment of Yellowstone, when President Woodrow Wilson signed legislation creating a new federal bureau, the National Park Service, in the Department of the Interior. This action culminated years of efforts to establish a separate bureau to administer and coordinate policies and plans for parks and monuments. The act created the National Park Service to:

... conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations"

This mission statement, known as the Park Service Organic Act, continues to guide the management of the parks today. National park, lakeshore, military park, historic site, memorial, preserve and trail are just a few of the titles that have been used to designate our national parklands since Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872. Over the years, new titles have been created whenever new parklands were authorized that differed somewhat from those already in the National Park System. Today there are more than 370 areas in the National Park System covering more than 83 million acres in every state (except Delaware), the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House.

Units of the National Park System have been created in two principle ways: Acts of Congress and presidential proclamations. When Congress creates an addition to the National Park System, it determines the name and designation for each area and makes reference to the general concepts under which it will be managed. Sometimes Congress is very specific about management terms; sometimes Congress simply refers to the 1916 National Park Service Act.

The areas in the system are a remarkable representation of the nation's greatest natural and cultural places and recreational areas of outstanding attraction. Not every park is a Yellowstone, not every historic site boasts an Independence Hall. But all have resources and values that make them special and nationally significant.

**Park Featured on cards:**

ANTETAM NATIONAL  
BATTLEFIELD (MD)

CUYAHOGA VALLEY  
NATIONAL RECREATION  
AREA (OH)

EVERGLADES NATIONAL  
PARK (FL)

FORT FREDERICA  
NATIONAL MONUMENT  
(GA)

FREDERICK FOUGLASS  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
(D.C.)

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL  
RECREATION AREA (CA)

GREAT SMOKY  
MOUNTAINS NATIONAL  
PARK (NC/TN)

HAWAII VOLCANOES  
NATIONAL PARK (HI)

HOMESTEAD NATIONAL  
MONUMENT OF AMERICA  
(NE)

JEFFERSON NATIONAL  
EXPANSION MEMORIAL  
(MO)

LOWELL NATIONAL  
HISTORICAL PARK (KY)

MAMMOTH CAVE  
NATIONAL PARK (CO)

MESA VERDE NATIONAL  
PARK (CO)

PICTURED ROCKS  
NATIONAL LAKESHORE  
(MI)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Ask the whole group to brainstorm what they think of when they hear the term "national park." Record the students' responses on newsprint or a flip chart so you can add to the list though out the entire project.
- Briefly introduce the history of the National Park System (refer to background information on previous pages). Explain that Yellowstone National Park, set aside by Congress in 1872, was the first national park in the system and the world;.
- Organize the class into groups of four or five students each and assign the following tasks:

**TIMEKEEPER:**

makes sure the group finishes its task in the time allotted

**RECORDER:**

records the group's ideas or writes the group's answers to specific questions

**REPORTER:**

presents the group's findings to the class

**MATERIALS MANAGER:**

is responsible for any materials (in this case photo cards) that the group needs

**FACILITATOR**

makes sure everyone in the group participates in the activity and feels a part of the process

You may want to write the job descriptions on newsprint as a visual reminder for the students.

- Ask the students to think of a name for their group. They will work in their groups though out the unit.

- Give each group two national park photo cards and two copies of the National Park Explorer Notes. Explain that each group's assignment is to explore two national parks and report their discoveries to the class. The groups should use the photograph and the information on the back of each card to fill out the worksheets. Each group should report its findings to the entire class, display its photo cards, and place markers on the map of the United States of America where the parks are located. Discuss the students' questions.

- Ask all the students if there is anything they would like to add to or delete from their national park brainstorm list as a result of what they learned in this activity. (The students should add to and edit their list as they go through all the activities in this kit.)

- Ask the students to make an inference as to what they think the purpose for the National Park Service is, based on what they know and what they have learned so far. Together, brainstorm a mission statement for the National Park Service and write it on newsprint or flip chart.

- Have the class put its National Park Service mission statement on the wall. Copy the National Park Service mission statement from the Organic Act onto newsprint (see following section). Ask the class to compare the two mission statements and discuss the purpose for the National Park Service. Note: In 1916, the National Park Service was established as an agency to manage the national parks. 44 years after Yellowstone, the first national park, was established.

- Explain that the national parks belong to us all. It is everyone's responsibility to learn about and care for the parks. Refer to Franklin D. Roosevelt's quote in the beginning of the background section and discuss what it means. Ask the students to imagine that they are on a talk show and the interviewer asks them to answer the question "What do you think of the national parks?" Have them write their response in their journal and record their own quote.

## **EXTENSIONS:**

- Play a National Park Service "Who am I" game. Tape a national park photo card on the back of a student. The student should guess what park is on his or her back based on clues from the class.

- Make a time line on the history of the National Park Service using the photo cards and background information. Add important dates in U.S. history to the time line. Research other parks and add them to the time line. Have the students find out if any parks were established in the year they were born, or during other years significant for them.

- If your class has computer access to the World Wide Web, have the students visit the National Park Service home page (<http://www.nps.gov>), or the home pages of individual parks (accessible through the National Park Service home page) -They can download pictures and information for other photo cards from the Web or send e-mail questions to park rangers.

- Have the class research information about the state and county parks in your area. Compare them with the national parks the class has learned about. Discuss the concept of "national significance."

- Have students share their experiences at national parks by giving slide, video, or photo presentations to the class.

**KEY WORDS:**

Antiquities Act, Congress, mission, national monument, national park, national significance, Organic Act, U.S. National Park Service

**ANTIQUITIES ACT,**

The legislation that allows the President to set aside historic and natural landmarks as national monuments, passed in 1906.

**MISSION:**

An assignment one is sent to carry out; the business with which a group or organization is charged.

**NATIONAL MONUMENT-**

Landmark, structure, or other object of historic or scientific interest set aside by the federal government and maintained for public enjoyment or study.

**NATIONAL PARK:**

Generally a large natural place having a wide variety of attributes, at times including significant historic assets. Hunting, mining, and consumptive activities are not authorized.

**NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

Important to the entire country; important to our shared national heritage.

**ORGANIC ACT-**

The legislation that establishes the US. National Park Service and designates the Service's central mission, passed in 1916.

**U.S. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE:**

The US. government bureau within the Department of the Interior that manages and protects the national parks.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Albright, Horace M., and Robert Cahn. *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933*, Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1985.

Albright, Horace M., Russell E. Dickenson, and William Penn Mott, Jr *National Park Service: The Story Behind the Scenery*, Las Vegas: KC Publications, 1 98 7.

National Park Service Home Page: <http://www.nps.gov>

National parks represented on the photo cards:

ANTIETAM NB  
PO Box 158  
Sharpsburg, MD 21782-0158  
301-432-5124

CUYAHOGA VALLEY NRA  
Vaughn Road  
Brecksville, OH 44141-3018  
800-445-9667

EVERGLADES NP  
OI State Road 9336  
Homestead, FL 33034-6733  
305-242-7700

FORT FREDERICA NM  
Route 9 Box 286 C  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522-9710  
912-638-3639

FREDERICK DOUGLASS NHS  
1411 W St SE  
Washington, DC 20020-4813  
202-426-5961

GOLDEN GATE NRA  
Fort Mason, Building 201  
San Francisco, CA 94123-1308  
415-556-0560

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NP  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gathnburg, TN 37738-4102  
615-436-1200

HAWAII VOLCANOES NP  
PO Box 52  
Hawaii National Park, HI 96718-0052  
808-967-7311

HOMESTEAD NM OF AMERICA 15610  
RR 3 Box 47  
Beatrice, NE 68310-9416  
402-223-3514

JEFFERSON NATIONAL EXPANSION 40C)  
MEMORIAL  
11 N 4th Street  
St. Louis, MO 63102-1882 314-425-4465

LOWELL NHP  
67 Kirk Street  
Lowell, NIA 0 1 852 -1796  
978-970-5000

MAMMOTH CAVE NP  
Mammoth Cave, KY42259-0007  
502-758-2328

MESA VERDE N P  
PO Box 8  
MesaVerde, CO 81330-0008  
303-529-4465

PICTURED ROCKS NL  
PO Box 40  
Munising, NE 49862-0040  
906-387-3700

National Park Handbooks, available through the Harpers Ferry Historical Association 1-800-821-5206.

Runte, Alfred. *National Parks: The American Experience*, second edition. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987.





The arrowhead is the official National Park Service emblem. The sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife; the mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values; and the arrowhead represents historical and archeological values.

### **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MISSION STATEMENT**

"The Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas...by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose...(which) is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

### **Legislation by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America**

#### **Organic Act of 1916**

An act to establish the National Park Service:

The National Park Service shall promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reserves. The purpose is to preserve the scenery, natural, and historic objects, and wildlife, and to provide for the enjoyment of these areas in such a way that will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. (August 25, 1916)

#### **Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument (83 Statute 101)**

An act to establish Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument:

In order to preserve and interpret for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the excellently preserved insect and leaf fossils and related geologic sites at the Florissant Lakebeds, the Secretary of the Interior may acquire lands in Teller County. These lands shall not exceed 6,00 acres, and will be for the purpose of establishing Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument.

The Secretary of the Interior shall administer the property in accordance with the Organic Act of 1916, and for other purposes. (August 25, 1969)

# National Park Explorer Notes

## Understanding our National Parks

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Names:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your group has been sent to explore a national park and bring information back your class. Use the photo card to discover something about your national park. Record you exploration notes on this sheet.

First, look only a the front side of the photograph. Record your answers in the space provided.

What two features stand out in this photograph?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are two things that you find special about the park in this photograph?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List three questions that you have about the park in the photograph.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now read the back of the photograph. Use the information to answer the questions listed below. Record your answers in the space provided.

What is the park name? \_\_\_\_\_

In what city and state is the park located? (Be ready to place a marker on a map to show where the park is located.) \_\_\_\_\_

How many people visit the park each year? \_\_\_\_\_

On what date was this park established? \_\_\_\_\_

How many years has the park been a national park? \_\_\_\_\_

What are three things that make this park special? \_\_\_\_\_

What makes this park so special that it should be preserved and protected for future generations? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are three questions you would like to ask about this park? (You need not have the answers.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

On a separate sheet of paper, share your visit to one of the parks with a friend. Create a postcard and write a message to your best friend.